



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE (BHR)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

ERITREA – Complex Emergency/Drought

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Background

In May 1998, Ethiopia and Eritrea began a military confrontation over their shared border, which extends approximately 600 miles. The border dispute resulted in intermittent outbreaks of violence, destruction of infrastructure, and significant displacement in both countries. The latest bout of intense fighting between Ethiopian and Eritrean troops occurred in May and June 2000. The Organization for African Unity (OAU) brokered a cessation of hostilities agreement that was signed by both countries on June 18, 2000. As part of the agreement, the United Nations (U.N.) established the U.N. Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to oversee the peace process between the two countries. UNMEE consists of approximately 4,200 troops and military observers to monitor the two countries' adherence to the terms of the cease-fire agreement and conduct demining that will facilitate the resettlement of conflict-affected populations.

The Eritrean population, especially in the Gash Barka and Debub zones, experienced extremely adverse humanitarian conditions during the conflict. These zones, Eritrea's breadbasket, typically produce more than 70% of national food requirements. In 1999, grain production throughout the country was more than 320,000 metric tons (MTs), however, during the height of the conflict with Ethiopia, grain production slipped to 85,000 MTs. Landmines and unexploded ordnance from both the Eritrean and Ethiopian armies remain a problem in both zones.

In addition to the conflict, drought conditions over the last three years, particularly in the Anseba, Debub, Northern Red Sea, and Southern Red Sea zones, have had an adverse impact on the humanitarian situation in Eritrea. In FY 2000, failure of the winter harvest in the eastern regions of the country created additional dependency on external food assistance. As in other parts of the Horn, pastoralists in Eritrea suffered extensive losses to their livestock herds and other personal assets.

Numbers Affected

Conflict-Affected: According to the U.N. 2001 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Eritrea, more than 1,048,000 people, living in organized camps or in host communities, were affected by conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since May 12, 2001, UNHCR has repatriated more than 16,588 conflict-affected Eritreans from Sudan. In addition, between March 30 and April 20, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) repatriated 226 Eritrean civilians from Ethiopia.

Drought-Affected: According to the U.N. Appeal for Eritrea, more than 738,000 people, primarily in the Anseba, Northern Red Sea, Southern Red Sea, and Debub zones, are affected by the drought conditions. The drought-affected populations in Eritrea, many of whom are agro-pastoralists, have suffered from three years of failed crops and declining herds.

Current Situation

Conflict-Affected Populations: Due to the June planting period, U.N. Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) have increased attempts to return both IDPs and refugees to the Gash Barka and Debub zones, and recent reports indicate that conflict-affected IDPs are returning to their homes in the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ). However, landmines and unexploded ordnance remain a security threat to the returning population.

On May 1, 2001, in an attempt to get data on the humanitarian needs in the TSZ, GSE and U.N. officials conducted a rapid assessment of 73 villages in the Gash Barka, Debub, and Southern Red Sea zones. Based on their findings, the water/sanitation, health, food security, and education sectors were determined to be key areas for moving the situation from crisis to recovery. In addition, a recent USAID/OFDA and USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) joint assessment revealed that the water/sanitation sector is a humanitarian concern to the returning population in the TSZ.

Drought-Affected Populations: Although the food security of the drought-affected population remains a concern, the immediate overall humanitarian condition is being addressed. With limited food stocks and decimated herds, the upcoming rainy season is critical to the recovery of the affected areas. In addition, improvement in the grain

production of the conflict-affected Gash Barka and Debub zones will have a significant impact on the overall food security situation.

In March 2001, USAID/OFDA staff traveled with UNICEF to the drought-affected areas in the Anseba zone. Findings from Anseba, a mostly agro-pastoralist area, indicate a high dependency on food aid provided by the World Food Program (WFP), decreased herds due to compromised prices and disease, and higher numbers of people vying for access to clean water and pasture lands.

USG Assistance

USAID/OFDA: Due to the continued effects of the border conflict and drought on Eritrea's population, U.S. Ambassador William Clarke re-declared complex emergency and drought disasters for Eritrea on October 6, 2000. In response, USAID/OFDA continued its assistance to Eritrea in order to facilitate the recovery of vulnerable populations by supporting agriculture, health and nutrition, and water programs. In FY 2001, USAID/OFDA programs focus on the returning population affected by conflict, as well as drought-affected Eritreans.

In FY 2000, USAID/OFDA spent more than \$5.3 million to fund emergency programs in health, nutrition, potable water, agriculture, and logistics programs, primarily in the conflict-affected areas. USAID/OFDA has focused on underserved populations affected by drought. In FY 2001 to date, USAID/OFDA has obligated approximately \$1.1 million to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Medical Corps (IMC), and CARE.

USAID/FFP: In FY 2001 to date, USAID's Food for Peace Office (USAID/FFP) has programmed 4,000 MTs, valued at more than \$2.8 million, of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food assistance to populations affected by drought and conflict in Eritrea. Food commodities are being provided to WFP, targeting supplementary feeding, food-for-work, and food-for-training activities.

USDA: In FY 2001 to date, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) intends to ship 105,000 MTs of Section 416(b) emergency food commodities, valued at approximately \$37.5 million. All of the commodities are being provided to WFP, targeting supplementary feeding, food-for-work, and food-for-training activities.

State/PRM: In FY 2000, the Department of State's Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (PRM) contributed \$2 million to ICRC to assist war-affected populations, Prisoners of War (POWs), and detainees in both Ethiopia and Eritrea and \$5.7 million to UNHCR to support Eritrean refugees in Sudan, Yemen, and Djibouti, as well as Eritrean IDPs located along the Sudanese border. FY 2001 funding has not been earmarked at this time.

Summary of USG FY 2001 Funding (to date)

USAID/OFDA	\$1,082,000
USAID/FFP	\$2,829,700
USDA	\$37,500,000
Total USG Assistance in FY 2001.....	\$41,411,700

USAID/OFDA bulletins can be obtained from the USAID web site at http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/situation.html